



# USAID | AFGHANISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Afghan women and girls have made significant gains with the support of USAID, working in partnership with the Afghan government and other international donors:

- About 3.5 million girls are enrolled in school according to the Afghan Ministry of Education
- USAID supported the increase of women in the health workforce. In 2002, only 25 percent of health facilities had a female health worker. As of 2015, 85 percent of health facilities have at least one female health worker (doctor, nurse or midwife)
- USAID has facilitated \$3.2 million in private sector loans to 1,756 businesswomen and supported 22 business and entrepreneurship workshops for more than 1,200 businesswomen across all 34 provinces.

Photo credit: USAID/Afghanistan

## Gender

The 2015 United Nations' Gender Inequality Index ranks Afghanistan 171 among 188 countries. Afghan women continue to struggle for parity in health care, economic opportunities, and political empowerment. However, Afghan women must play an active role in the future stability and development of Afghanistan. Afghanistan cannot tackle poverty, injustice, violence, or other major problems unless women fully participate in the country's economic, social and political life. USAID is resolved to continue its support for Afghan women and girls. Significant progress is being made each year through the collaboration of USAID, the Afghan government, other donors, Afghan and international non-governmental organizations, and the courageous Afghan women who fight for their rights.

## OUR WORK

USAID plays a leading role in implementing the U.S. government's strategy to support the women and girls of Afghanistan by expanding access to health and education, creating economic opportunities, advocating for women's rights, and providing Afghan women with the tools they need to take on leadership and decision-making roles within the government, economy, and civil society.

### WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

USAID Afghanistan manages the largest portfolio of women's empowerment activities in the world. The Promote Women's Empowerment program represents an investment of more than \$231 million including: women's leadership development, civil service training, employment in government, civil society advocacy and economic participation through business development, internships and apprenticeships. Promote targets 75,000 beneficiaries over the five-year life of the program.

### HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Afghan women and girls today have greater access to education and healthcare services and also directly contribute to the improved health of their fellow citizens. USAID helps to increase access to education for women and girls by training more than 54,000 female teachers, providing university scholarships to qualified female students, expanding community-based education, supporting institutions of higher learning, and strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education to deliver high-quality education throughout Afghanistan.

Increased access to basic healthcare, especially skilled birth attendants, is essential to improving maternal and child health. USAID works to save the lives of women and children by making basic healthcare more accessible by supporting health clinics across the country, training healthcare workers, and addressing chronic malnutrition, which keeps children from continuing their education. Utilizing a treatment protocol developed by the World Health Organization and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, USAID also addresses gender-based violence by training healthcare professionals to provide high-quality and compassionate care to survivors.

## **AGRICULTURE**

Programs in the provinces make a special effort to reach female farmers and entrepreneurs. USAID enhanced the skills of 3,361 women engaged in extension services, who led farmer field schools and field demonstrations, and developed training materials and videos for 2,258 female farmers. USAID assisted 948 female farmers to improve volume and quality of harvested cashmere and karakul resulting in \$110,000 in combined sales; improved productivity and health of livestock herds through women-led veterinary field units and female extension workers; and increased women's access to credit through loans worth \$1.78 million for 1,036 female farmers, cooperative members, and businesswomen. USAID advances the status of women in the Afghan Government by helping the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock create its National Network on Women Empowerment in Agriculture and train 208 female civil servants.

## **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

USAID has established a loan program with financial products designed specifically for business women, and the program approved \$3.2 million in loans as of August FY 2016 for women-owned commercial enterprises and smaller-scale enterprises. USAID provides women with job training and placement services, access to credit, and financial products designed specifically for women who seek to start or expand businesses. Since 2012, more than 11,500 women have participated in USAID job training programs aimed at mid-career/semi-professional employees and job seekers. As a result, more than 2,000 women have been placed in jobs or promoted with salary increases.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

USAID continues to support a Female Engineer Internship Program that aims to increase the number of qualified women in this traditionally male dominated profession. By 2015, twelve females graduated from the internship and the majority is employed or pursuing advanced studies. In FY 2016, there are eight interns currently participating in the program. This highly competitive and specialized internship has provided "real world" exposure with the opportunity to collaborate with experienced engineers, develop problem-solving skills, practice review of designs, and execute computer aided design work. The graduates of the internship are highly trained with marketable professional skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

## **DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**

USAID partners with the Afghan government to provide women's rights awareness training for law students and judges, sponsor roundtables that promote public debate and dialogue concerning women's rights, and build women's skills to influence public policy and advocate for reform. USAID supports the training of female judges to preside over courts, manage cases, and provide due process to Afghan citizens. Additionally, USAID has supported training for 2,290 female media professionals, 720 female executives, and 166 national female legislators across the country. USAID initiatives have helped shape gender-related legislation, including the Elimination of Violence against Women law.

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